

22 July 2024

Public Accounts Committee
Parliament of NSW
Via Email: pac@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

RE: Submission to the inquiry into a framework for performance reporting and driving wellbeing outcomes in NSW

Suicide Prevention Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. We are the national peak body for suicide prevention, with over 320 members representing more than 140,000 workers, staff, and volunteers across Australia. We provide a collective voice for service provider organisations both large and small, as well as practitioners, researchers, local collaboratives, and people with lived experience.

Suicide Prevention Australia welcomes and applauds the Government's commitment to introduce a Performance and Wellbeing Framework (the Framework). The Framework offers a valuable opportunity to synchronise with and complement suicide prevention commitments from the Government. The distress that can lead to suicide is driven by a range of factors, not only mental illness, also issues such housing insecurity and homelessness, the harms of gambling and contact with the justice system. Suicide prevention therefore requires a whole-of-government response, with many of the socio-economic and environmental determinants of suicide cutting across multiple portfolio agencies.

The Framework in its current form touches on many of these determinants, but not in a specific enough manner to be meaningful for suicide prevention.

Suicide Prevention Australia would recommend adding a sub-framework to this document, with each measure dedicated to tracking the progress of whole-of-government responses to suicide prevention.

It is critical that suicide is specifically addressed by the framework, due to the numbers of those in NSW impacted by suicides, and also because this would enable the Government to demonstrate the impacts of its whole-of-government initiatives, especially the forthcoming Suicide Prevention act.

Suicides have a significant impact across NSW. Each year in NSW over 900 people die by suicide.¹ And research indicates that for each death an average of 135 people experience distress due to losing a person they cared about.² In addition, each year over 200,000 people in NSW attempt or seriously consider suicide which demonstrates the level of distress across the community.³

The benefits of a sub-framework on suicide prevention would be a meaningful measurement of agency responses, both in isolation as their response to suicide prevention, but also able to be combined as a whole-of-government evaluation and outcomes update. This is important because so many of the determinants are interconnected, and each contributes to suicide risk. Being able to track the determinants within performance measures in agency, Government, and community contexts will provide the most complete picture of suicide risk and evaluation.

Specific indicators for suicide deaths, suicidal behaviour and self-harm, and psychological distress should also be included.

Reporting across the array of determinants will better inform Government decision making by providing a view across portfolios in a dedicated suicide prevention framework, instead of these measures being isolated and unrelated in performance terms. It will enhance inter-departmental collaboration, providing linkages in outcomes from homelessness to domestic and family violence, cost-of-living to discrimination, natural disasters to harms of alcohol and other drugs. Combining the outcomes of these seemingly disparate issues will tackle the combined stressors in our community that lead to suicidal risk.

The determinants that have been identified by Suicide Prevention Australia, following extensive research and consultation,⁴ cover wide-ranging causes of distress, including contact with the justice system; housing insecurity and homelessness; educational disruption; and domestic, family, and sexual violence.

The full list of determinants covers multiple portfolios but they are also represented under each of the Framework's eight themes: Healthy, Skilled, Prosperous, Housed, Secure, Community, Connected and Sustainable.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Causes of Death, Australia, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/2022>.

² Cerel, J., Brown, M. M., Maple, M., Singleton, M., Van de Venne, J., Moore, M., & Flaherty, C. (2019). How many people are exposed to suicide? Not six. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 49(2), 529-534.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) *National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/2020-2022>.

⁴ Suicide Prevention Australia. 2023. <https://www.suicidepreventionaust.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/SPA-SEDS-Background-Paper-August-2023-Designed.pdf>

These measures can be reported upon by adopting a range of indicators from the OECD framework that help measure factors associated with suicide, including income, employment, education, housing, and social participation, in addition to specific indicators including relationship breakdown, family violence, mental health, social connection, and early childhood development.

Whole-of-government approaches to address and support improvements to wellbeing can support suicide prevention efforts as well as broader efforts to improve the mental health of New South Wales residents. If any further information is required, please contact Rebekah Henricksen, Senior Government Relations Advisor, rebekahh@suicidepreventionaust.org.

Yours sincerely,



Nieves Murray
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